

THE STORY OF LITTLE JANE AND ME.



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THE STORY OF LITTLE JANE AND ME

BY

M. E.

So forth they goe together (God before).

Damon and Pythias, whom death could not sever :

.

Whose lives although decay'd, yet loves decayed never.

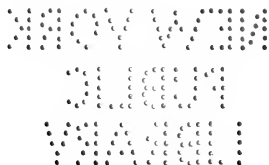
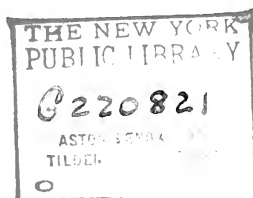
Spenser.



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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teenth Street, and while it seemed a beautiful house to live in, — larger and finer than ours, — still, it was so far up town, and there were so many waste fields between us and it, that we thought it a pity to have to live there.

Little Jane and I had one great trouble: there were two years and a half between us, and it was our wish to be twins. We did what we could about it: we were dressed alike; we always had dark eyes and rosy cheeks; but Little Jane was round and plump, with fair skin and loose golden curls and a little straight row of pearls for teeth, whereas I was lank and brown, with crooked teeth and hair as straight as an Indian's. My mother struggled to straighten the teeth: I strove to curl the hair; in vain did I wet it, and plaster it around the curling-stick and hold it on until my small fingers ached; before I could get to the foot of the stairs it was as straight as ever. So I gave it up in despair, and comforted myself with curling Little Jane's hair.

Perhaps I might have reaped some advan-

MASTERS
JULY 1884
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tage from my two years of precedence had it not been for one thing, — Little Jane had had inflammation of the lungs when she was nine months old and I had n't ! Why there should have been such a charm about inflammation of the lungs I cannot say ; I never knew ; but so it was. I myself had been lucky enough to be run over by a carryall with three men in it, which strikes me now as twice as good as inflammation of the lungs, but it brought me no credit then. I was, at first, inside the carryall ; but, with the agility for which I was noted, I pitched over the dashboard and fell among the wheels. I was picked up by my terrified father, and I at once asked, “ Where is my doll ? ”

When she had been found, and we had both been dusted and shaken into shape, that was the end of it, — I cannot remember even speaking of it. I tried to limp, but no one took any notice, and I could not tell on which leg persons commonly did limp. I accordingly gave it up as a bad job, and soon forgot the whole thing.

Everybody loved Little Jane, and I agreed with everybody. She was so loving and joyous, so full of the true childlike spirit of simplicity, that all hearts were open to her; and with all she found herself welcome and at home. No faintest thought of jealousy ever cast its shade on me; nevertheless I used to wish that people would love me, too. But after all I had the best of it; for whereas everybody loved Little Jane, Little Jane loved me with a devotion and loyalty that were part of her character, and which knew no change.

She had a lively imagination, and my happiest hours were when she was telling me stories. My favourite story ran through several years, and was about two little sisters, Belle and Agnes, who lived in the steeple of Trinity Church. They had scoops which they used for scooping rooms and passages in the walls of the church. At night they scooped their way under the streets and into houses, where they foraged for food, and wrought havoc among timid souls who dreamed of ghosts and witches.

Another of Little Jane's tales was about some fairies "who lived in a beautiful forest near a pond. They were all happy for a long time, until at last some of the fairies were disobedient and all was confusion and misery. So the king called his people together and told them that great sorrow had come among them because of the disobedience of a few, and that his kingdom could not be happy unless his people obeyed his laws.

"Then he commanded some of his servants to take those disobedient fairies, and to shut each one up in a lily-bud, and to put all the lily-buds in a boat and row them out to the deepest part of the pond and throw them into the water. And the servants did so, and the stems of the lily-buds sank into the bottom of the pond and grew there. And that is the way there came to be pond-lilies."

Little Jane also "made poetry" more beautiful than even her tales. One piece was written to me and prized by me above rubies, not only for the wit of its fancy, but for the delicacy of its sentiment : —

“How do you do, my sister dear ?
I hope that you are well.
And I have something lovely, lamb,
Thy dearest self to tell.
It’s not that I am very well ;
It is what you will love,
That, oh ! you are so handsome,
Your sister far above.
And some one whom you love, my sweet,
Hath told this thing to me :
It was thy darling aunty Jane ;
But say not I told thee !”

The more I read this choice bit, the more its genius shone clear, and I showed it to every one who came to the house, until Little Jane’s modesty could no longer stand the strain and she fell into tears, when our father took the paper from me, folded it with care, and put it in his pocket-book, telling me that I could not have it again until I had learned to use it without abusing it. Alas ! I saw it no more.

Little Jane never failed to repeat to me anything she could hear in my praise, thinking, I suppose, to make up to me in this way for not being loved as she was, — as Joe

Gargery “spooned gravy” into Pip’s plate to soften to him the hardness of his sister’s temper. The tenderness of Little Jane’s heart and the unselfishness and generosity of her nature made her long to share all her good things with me; and it was one of her great pleasures to think, and to insist upon it, that I was “prettier” than she. It was her way of filling my cup, so that it, like hers, should run over. It was no wonder I loved her, nor ever sought for other friends among our playmates.

One day I objected to something she asked, and after a pause she said:—

“Sister, I don’t feel very well. I think perhaps I shall not live until to-morrow.”

This awful threat brought me to instant terms. But it was seldom I balked at anything she proposed, for her imagination was so lively, so far beyond my own, that I was only eager for her to lead that I might have the fun of following.

We were both religious children, but it was curious to see how differently the same train-

ing acted upon our two natures. Little Jane's religion made her happy, but mine made me wretched. "God is a consuming fire," "God is angry with the wicked every day," were texts that I dwelt on with morbid self-conceit. I thought that God was, as a rule, "angry" with me, but that now and again He might be appeased by my doing something peculiarly distasteful but righteous. Little Jane's prayers were full of the joy of living. Two of them were written down, one when she was very young : —

"O God, are there music in heaven? Are there one? are there two? are there three?"

The second later : —

"O God, I thank Thee that I had such a good time with my little cousins to-day. I never had such a good time in my life, O Lord. And I thank Thee, O Lord, that I learnt my geography lesson before I went, because, O Lord, Miss Stone says, 'Duty performed makes a rainbow in the heart.'"

My prayers, on the contrary, were mere confessions of sins more or less heinous ;

and that the "unpardonable sin" was one of them I never for a moment doubted, my only doubt being which particular one it was. I looked forward to being "grown up" as a day of freedom from sin. I knew that my father and mother never did wrong, nor should I when I was grown up. I thought them both perfectly wise, beautiful, and of a great age. As a fact, our mother was not quite eighteen years older than I, so it will be seen how much ground I had for my belief.

Our father was a stern, reserved man, of deep feeling, a close observer, a keen critic, with a fine sense of humour. He was seldom demonstrative towards us; but we knew that he loved us, nor ever doubted that he also knew that we loved him, although I, at least, said even less than he did. I shall never forget one day at dinner when he found a skewer in the meat; as he drew it out it flew and struck my forehead. He sprang from his chair and took me in his arms to see if I were hurt, and the way in which he held me

and looked at me would have repaid me for having the skewer go in at one side of my head and out at the other. But we were equally dumb.

Little Jane and I were brought up on the principle of being seen and not heard. We were not expected to talk at table unless we were spoken to; and we ate what was set before us, asking no questions. We might refuse things to a certain extent: I was not obliged to eat sweet potatoes or squash, but I could not escape mutton or corned beef. There was a certain Sunday dessert with raisins that was always a comfort to us; for we deftly slipped the raisins under the table and poked them on a ledge, going back for them after dinner to while away the tedium of afternoon church.

In winter we had buckwheat cakes for breakfast every morning except Sunday and Monday. Little Jane and I might eat only three; it was therefore a point to choose large cakes, politely refusing small ones when they were passed. One morning I had had



two of mine, and was biding my time, hoping for a plate of really good-sized ones ; but they came in smaller and smaller. Our father, who perfectly understood my case, said : —

“John, tell the cook to send in a large cake.”

“Yes, sir,” said John.

“Not too large, John,” said our mother in her gentle voice.

“Not too small, John,” called out our father to the vanishing John.

Dear John ! He came in shortly, bearing a single cake the size of the griddle, which hung all around over the edge of the plate. Whether I was allowed to eat the whole or any part of it, I do not remember ; that our father should have interfered for my pleasure was more than enough for me.

Little Jane and I were brought up to obey promptly and without words. Answering back, teasing, arguing, were things totally unknown to us. But while we thus acknowledged the authority of our father and mother and, to a limited extent, of our governess

and aunt Ellen, we drew the line there, and we must have been what nurses call "a handful."

I recall only one case of direct disobedience. There was in the nursery a bell-rope, which hung over the sofa, and this we had been forbidden to touch. We had no notion what the bell was for, nor did it interest us in any way. One afternoon Little Jane and I were playing on the sofa, when nurse suddenly said in a peremptory tone, "Children, you are not to touch that bell."

Whether she really thought we were going to ring it, or whether she chose to give an order which she felt sure would be obeyed, I do not know. I have heard our mother say she was an irritating person, without judgment. Now we were not so much as thinking of the bell, but her manner filled us with wrath: we sprang to our feet, seized the rope with our four little hands and jerked it up and down with all our might.

At this moment the door opened and our father stood before us. I can never recall

his look without shrinking: it was one of mixed astonishment, incredulity, grief. He came gravely forward, and taking us by the hand, led us into his room, and after a few words struck us several times on the palm of the hand. I have read of the indignation and humiliation of children on being struck, but I felt nothing of that,—nothing but the weight of our father's look. That I had failed him like that!

Our mother used now and then to slap our hands with a whalebone; but that was a mere trifling sting, not worth minding. I disliked far more being told to sit on a chair until I could sing. Brooding over fancied wrongs or real disappointments and preferring misery to cheering up was always my snare; and it was impossible to keep one's ill-temper through a cheerful song. It was a salutary course with me. As for Little Jane, her sunny temper and clear conscience helped her over such rough ways, and she would begin her song as she clambered up into her chair, while I sat sullenly kicking my heels,

determined to die rather than sing. I was, as a friend once said, obstinate to the point of firmness.

I remember only once voluntarily and instantly throwing off a fit of ill-temper. Something had gone wrong, I have no idea what, — anything, nothing, — when I came suddenly face to face with my father. He gave me a keen glance, and then, with a quizzical smile, said “Well, thundercloud, what’s the matter with *you*?” I gathered myself together and, smiling back, answered stoutly, “Nothing, father.” A light came into his face; he stretched out his arm and drew me to his side. He gave me no word; I wanted none: it was enough that he knew what I had done, and that I had done it for him.

Constant exercise indoors, out of doors, and at gymnasium had made me as strong as a little lion; and one day, standing before my father, I looked up at him and said, “Father, I could lift you.” He smiled at me indulgently, as if amused. He was a tall man, —

“six feet in his stockings.” I did not know what “in his stockings” meant, but, if any one spoke of him as being “six feet,” I invariably added, “in his stockings.” I felt it to be much better than without the stockings. It was therefore no light boast when I said, “Father, I could lift you ;” yes, six feet in his stockings. His smile I thought gave consent, and throwing my arms about his knees, I lifted him from the ground. When, flushed with triumph, I looked up, how his face had changed ! “My daughter,” he said, in his lowest, sternest tones, “never let me know of your doing such a thing again.”

“But you said I might, father,” I faltered ; yet, though I trembled under the weight of his hand on my shoulder, I knew that he was not angry with me, — only troubled lest he should have hurt me.

II

WE had a little cousin who sometimes visited us with her mother, — little Katy and aunt Elizabeth. We were very fond of Katy ; but aunt Elizabeth was rather an awful presence, and a drawback to the pleasure of playing with Katy. We were too young to value or even understand the beauty and nobility of her character ; but in after years, when Little Jane and I were left alone, aunt Elizabeth's heart and home were open to us, and to her we looked for comfort, for counsel, for love, — and she never failed us. In those early days, however, we thought her "cross," and hard on Katy, who, though an uncommonly good child in our opinion, was yet always in disgrace and continually being whipped ; and these whippings were far more severe than ours. Little Jane, whose imagination was ever on the

alert, proposed one day that she should whip Katy, beginning gently and increasing the weight of the blows, until she should be used to it and not mind any more. Katy agreed somewhat reluctantly, and we went to work. She was laid across my knees, and Little Jane, armed with a slipper, — aunt Elizabeth's own weapon, — fell to (slap, slap, slap).

“Do I hurt you, Katy?”

“No, not much.”

“Well, I'll go a little harder then” (slap, slap, slap).

“Oh, that hurts! don't go so hard.”

“Well, but you know (slap, slap, slap), if I don't go hard you won't get used to it (slap, slap, slap); and if you once get really used to it (slap, slap, slap), then it won't matter if aunt Elizabeth whips you every day” (slap, slap, slap).

“Is n't that enough, Little Jane?”

“Oh, no, not nearly enough! Why (slap, slap, slap), I've got to whip you until you don't mind it at all” (slap, slap, slap).

Katy was New England born and bred ; moreover, she, like me, believed in Little Jane, and the whipping went merrily on until it was agreed that she was used to it. Then came a long day of suspense, waiting for Katy to be naughty, and, when the time came, Little Jane and I sat holding our breath, watching for Katy's release. She came to us sighing and sobbing : —

“ It hurt all the same, Little Jane.”

But Katy had her advantages. For one thing, she had finer clothes than we had, — more white frocks, more ruffled petticoats, more tucks and deeper embroidery on her pantalettes. This, Little Jane explained to me, was only fair, because Katy was an only child, whereas there were so many of us that our mother could not spare the time for so many fine clothes for each child. That seemed reasonable enough ; but there was another thing, — Katy was allowed to say “ *nasty* ” and we were not. This was a very sore point !

Aunt Elizabeth's argument was that

“nasty” was a good old English word, and therefore Katy might use it.

Our mother’s argument was that “nasty” was a nasty word, and therefore we might not use it.

Mrs. Lee’s argument was that her children should not play with Katy if she was allowed to use it.

Here was a dilemma! There are no such staunch partisans as children. We held with our sides. Katy flaunted “nasty;” Little Jane and I piously turned up our noses; and what became of the little Lees I have no notion.

III

OUR schoolroom was in a wing of the house over the kitchen, and the windows looked out on a grass-plot in the yard. Little Jane proposed one day that we should jump down. Accordingly we climbed up, stood on the window-ledge, and looked out. The grass seemed a long way off, and my heart failed me ; but Little Jane well knew how to call up my courage, and at a word from her I rallied and jumped. I landed on my feet, then sat down hard, striking my chin against my knees. The shock was so great that my first thought, as I fell in a heap, was "I suppose I'm dead ;" my second, "I must n't be dead until I have stopped Little Jane."

With what voice I could muster, and with a feeble wave of my hand, I groaned forth, "*Don't jump !*" Little Jane scrambled down

from her perilous height, tore down the back stairs, flew to my rescue, picked up the pieces and put them together again as good as new.

Needless to say, we did n't tell.

The nursery closet was the scene of many exploits. At one time we took it into our heads — or, more exactly, Little Jane took it into her head — that we should study our lessons on the top shelf. We were expert climbers, having spent our summers in the country and risked our necks on every tree within our range ; we were as nimble as cats, and had as many lives ; and it was not beyond us to step from the drawers to the broad lowest shelf, and then by pushing and pulling to scramble over the other shelves to the top, where we sat Turk-fashion with our books on our laps. It happened that our father and mother were away, and aunt Ellen and our governess, who were in charge, fearing to presume on their brief authority, said nothing ; but in course of time we had a letter from our father : —

“ Dear little daughters, it astonishes me to

find that there are no chairs in the house; please ask aunt Ellen to buy some at once."

This puzzled us at first, but when aunt Ellen smiled and said she thought it must be because we were studying on the top shelf of the closet, we took the hint and bore no malice. A word to the wise — or, rather, a word from our father — was sufficient.

Aunt Ellen was "principally noted," as our geography put it, for having been born in 1800; it seemed wonderful, and I believe we thought she was the only person born in that year. She was also noted, though in a less degree, for her antipathy to cats and cheese: it was popularly supposed that she would drop dead if a cat were brought to her, and cheese was nearly as fatal. She would faint, and have to be "brought to" with smelling-salts, if either was so much as named in her presence. "That animal" was as near as it was safe to come. I wonder that Little Jane's spirit of mischief did not prompt her to try the cat or cheese test; but she was perhaps held in check by a tale of

our grandfather, who suffered in the same foolish way, and who had barely escaped with his life when some one had shut up a cat in the closet of the room where he sat.

Aunt Ellen's room was a most interesting place. To begin with, she had a feather-bed, and sometimes I was allowed to sleep with her. There were two ways of getting into bed: one was to climb up over the edge, in which case I was all night rolling out; the other was to take a flying leap from a chair into the middle of the bed, when the feathers surged up in billows, and I lay all night in the trough of the sea. I liked to see the bed made up in the morning, and to smooth down the feathers with the broom-handle or aunt Ellen's yardstick.

She had a tall bureau and a dressing-table that were most fascinating; for the drawers were full of ribbons and laces and queer baskets and mysterious boxes, or, at Christmas time, with neatly tied parcels, some of which were sure to find their way into our stockings.

On her table there were three things, — a large Bible, an unabridged Walker's dictionary, and a still more unabridged inlaid workbox. The Bible I did not care for, as I had the same kind myself, and it always made me uncomfortable by reminding me of my own wickedness. But the workbox was a storehouse of treasures. It was lined with pink silk, and had pink silk pockets stuffed with tape, buttons, coloured silks, balls of cotton, and, best of all, there was a box of glass beads. As a great treat, aunt Ellen sometimes let us string these beads, and we made rings of marvellous beauty but fleeting show; for when the treat was done the beads were poured back into their box and stowed away in their own particular pocket.

The Walker's dictionary, if not beautiful, was yet of great value; for spelling was my Hill of Difficulty and my Slough of Despond, and the puzzle of *there* and *their*, or even *thier*, was too much for me. Now, the standard of spelling in our family was high, and to fall short nothing less than disgrace.

When our father was away we wrote letters to him, and if any word was misspelt it came back on a slip of paper for us to correct. It was no uncommon thing for four words of mine to meet this fate. I remember once hesitating between *rearly* and *rearlly*, and, being too lazy to look it up, I took the risk of *rearly*. Of course it came back, when nothing doubting I returned it as *rearlly*.

If our mother was in the room at the time of my struggles, she always said, "Look it up in the dictionary, my daughter;" but aunt Ellen would always look it up for me. I understood the use of my looking it up, but I could not see how it helped me to have aunt Ellen look it up. I have since had reason to think that aunt Ellen had the same trouble in living up to the family standard that I had. As for Little Jane, reading and writing (including spelling) came by nature.

But it must not be thought that I had no gifts because I could not spell and hated reading. Grammar and arithmetic were my delight; and I shall never forget the amuse-

ment of our father, who was ever ready to help us over a hard place, when I told him that I did a certain sum in the rule of three by "first reducing the oxen to cows."

Now, Little Jane hated grammar and arithmetic.

Our father was a dear lover of books, and he early taught us to value them, and to handle them with care. He had shelves built into the walls of the dining-room from the floor to the ceiling, first on one side of the fireplace, then on the other, as they were needed; and he had a book-plate which he pasted into the books. Pasting-day was a great delight, for we were allowed to help him, handing him the books and then laying them in tidy rows, covers open, on the floor to dry. Woe to the child who handed a book upside down, a standing memorial of her heedlessness; for the book-plate, once pasted in, was not to be unpasted.

Our father's love of books was equally divided between Little Jane and me. She loved the inside, I the outside. I liked

to keep our books ranged on the shelves strictly according to height and colour; and it bothered me to have them taken down, because it made the shelves look untidy. But Little Jane would read, and where she led I painfully followed; and she had her reward, for she taught me to love Shakespeare and the Arabian Nights. We had an old unexpurgated copy of the latter, — now worn to a shade, — which we read and read again in all the ignorance and innocence of childhood; and we should have been much astonished if any one had told us that we did not understand every word.

There was one book which we longed for and never had. Whether on principle or by accident, we seldom had things we asked for, and we sighed in vain for “Mother Goose.”

When we visited our little friends, our first question was, “Have you ‘Mother Goose’?”

Of course they had; and then, seated side by side on the floor, with the precious book between us, we were of no further trouble — or use — to our hosts. To this day, Mother

Goose holds her place in my heart with Shakespeare and the Arabian Nights. Perhaps we prized the book the more in that it was no common treat.

The dining-room was one of the pleasantest rooms in the house, because it was warm and bright; and breakfast was our pleasantest meal. There were no furnaces in those days (or, if there were, they were not common), and it was so comfortable to come down from our cold bedroom, with our fingers numb and our little selves shivering, into the glow of a blazing fire of "Liverpool coal." It was not until I was a woman grown that I recognized the smell of soft-coal gas. As a child I loved it: it meant comfort, and breakfast, and books (all tidy on their shelves), and our father and mother, and all good things. I never smell it now without feeling myself a child again in our dining-room, hand in hand with Little Jane.

IV

WE were both fond of music, but our father disliked it exceedingly! No one had told us this: we knew it because he could not endure our practising, and we were not allowed to play when he was at home; unless, indeed, we were asked to play by friends, and then we were not allowed to refuse. This was a dread ordeal to me, for I was proud and shy, — an unfortunate combination that inevitably makes a child awkward and self-conscious.

It was at this time that Jenny Lind came to America, and all the world went mad about her singing; and little wonder! We heard her talked of, and caught some of the enthusiasm, although we had scant idea of its real meaning. One day at dinner our father laid on the table three tickets, at the same time handing our mother a queer-looking thing in a gray leather case, which he called an

opera-glass. (I have it now ; it weighs nineteen and one half ounces and looks more like a field-glass than like the toy opera-glasses of this generation.) The tickets and the glass were for Jenny Lind, who was to sing in Handel's "Messiah."

We listened to what was said, vaguely wondering who was to use the third ticket ; but when our father turned to me — to me — and said, "My daughter, should you like to go?" I could scarcely believe my ears. I go to hear Jenny Lind? I go to an evening entertainment? I, who went to bed at seven o'clock, and had often tried to think how it would feel to be up at ten o'clock, and how the night looked when it was late? Could it be possible? And to have such a marked line drawn between Little Jane and me! But it was true ; and, when the night came, instead of undressing for bed, I put on my best frock, a red cashmere with roses on it, and — more wonder — without any hat or coat I was wrapped up and bundled into a carriage and driven to Tripler Hall.

Our seats were in the balcony, on the left ; the hall was enormous, I thought, and crowded with people and lights. Then the music began, — I did not know it was called orchestra, — and the tumult of sound filled me with terror and dismay. If our father could not endure our practising, what would become of him now ? My heart stood still as I waited to hear him say, “ Come, little daughter, we will go home now.” But when the music stopped and he clapped his hands violently, I gave myself up to a perfect content. Either he did like it, or he had made up his mind to do his work gallantly and go through with it like a man. I was safe.

And then Jenny Lind, in her white frock and with her hair crowned with white roses, stood in her place, and the first notes began : “ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.”

I have heard this oratorio many, many times since then, and the opening number has always been taken by a tenor voice ; but my firm belief is that Jenny Lind, and Jenny

Lind alone, sang every note, choruses and all, from "Comfort ye" to the last "Amen." I was there; I ought to know. But I will not insist upon it and lay myself open to musical criticism. Whatever she sang so filled me with wonder and delight that it swallowed up all the rest; and then and there I learned to love oratorio music, and I have been faithful to it ever since.

The pleasure of hearing Jenny Lind sing was not gone with the night, but gained in strength as I thought and talked of it and of her. Some one gave me a small picture of her in a black velvet frock, with a rose in her hair, which I treasured. But, best of all, it was decided that Little Jane and Katy should be taken to an afternoon concert, when Jenny Lind was to sing her "echo song" and her "bird song." This was all that was needed to make us perfectly happy, and Little Jane and Katy, all smiles and Sunday frocks, set out for their treat.

As the concert was long, and not wholly interesting to little people, they took two

story-books to while away the time. When they came home I flew to meet them; and “Did you love to hear her sing?” and “Did you like the bird song or the echo song better?” and “How did she look and what did she wear?” were the questions I poured forth in a breath. Little Jane and Katy hesitated, and hung their heads, and stood on one foot, and showed all the signs of a troubled mind, and then it came out that they had been so absorbed in their story-books that they had not noticed when Jenny Lind sang. I was speechless! But to-day I find it hard to forgive the friend who let them read their stories, so that they could not make even the poor boast that they had “heard Jenny Lind.”

Still it was something that Little Jane and I had both been to the concerts: nobody could deny that, and it was not necessary to explain further. We thought and talked, and ate and drank, and waked and dreamt, Jenny Lind, until at last one day our father said to us:—

“Why don’t you go to see her?”

“My dear!” said our gentle mother aghast.

“There is no reason why they should not go if they would like it,” he said, with a reassuring smile.

Our father’s manner to our mother was a daily study to me, and both Little Jane and I unconsciously took it for our ensample and strove to do as well. It was half worshipful, half protecting, and altogether lovely. So blindly did we follow in his steps that, some years later, when she was left to our care alone, Little Jane and I, in a rude scramble to give her the best seat, drew down a timely reproof from aunt Elizabeth: — “Children, you must not be selfish for your mother.”

But to go back to our astonished mother and our wondering little selves.

“You may go if you please,” our father repeated. And we pleased, although with some inward misgivings.

“What about flowers?” said our mother.

“They may take a single rose if you

think best, but I would not let them do any more."

"May I take my picture, and ask Jenny Lind to write her name on it?" I asked.

Our father said yes. And so it was settled, and we set forth alone, one of us holding a red rose and one a white rose. I put my picture in a choice book with a red cover — "The Eskdale Herd-boy." I cared nothing for the story, but it was one of my favourite books on account of the cover.

Jenny Lind was staying at a hotel near our home, and we knew the place well, because we went there every week for a dancing lesson; and the hotel clerks and porters knew us, too. They were very civil, and showed us to a reception-room not far from the entrance, and there we sat down on the only chair we saw anywhere near the door. By this time we were trembling with excitement, for it was our first venture alone in the (calling) world. At the other end of the room stood a group of ladies talking fast and loud in a strange tongue, with now and then

a pause to look at us. As a matter of fact, I doubt if they gave us a thought ; but we were sure they were talking of nothing else, and our hearts beat to suffocation, and something choked us in the throat. One lady in particular — I could pick her out of a crowd to-day, an immense woman in a tight-fitting black and white woollen frock, and with a mass of black hair, tumbled and tousled — kept looking at us over her shoulder and chattering in that awful foreign tongue, until fright grew into panic, and Little Jane and I burst into a passion of tears and, hand in hand, flew down the hall to the entrance door. We were ware of a man running after us, and calling to us to stop ; he only made things worse ; and, with fresh terror behind, we ran and sobbed until we burst into the shelter of our own home.

When our father came home to dinner, and shamefaced and guilty we told our tale, he laughed and laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks. He had one of the sweetest laughs I have ever heard, and the merriest

and most infectious. I looked at him in wonder. To have our shame turned to mirth, our tragedy to comedy, our defeat if not to triumph at least to a comedy of errors, a thing only to be laughed at, was such a lightening of our woe as had seemed impossible.

After this it was no uncommon thing for him to say, "Come here, my eldest hope, and tell me about your call on Jenny Lind."

I doubt if he would have enjoyed a crowned success as much as the disaster. But I cannot help wishing that Jenny Lind had talked to us, worn our roses, written her name on my picture.

The next time that we went to dancing-school the civil clerk said to our mother:—

"We were sorry, madam, that your little girls did not see Madam Jenny Lind the other day. She sent for them, and the man ran after them, but they would not stop."

V

ONE of our treats was to go down town with our mother, especially when she went to Stewart's or Arnold's. The shops were always delightful: they were so large and splendid, the goods were so elegant, the clerks so very obliging. We were sure to bring home a box, or a picture carefully stripped from a piece of cotton, or, best of all, a bit of coloured paper or an end of ribbon. The paper was beyond price for paper-dolls' dresses, and the ribbon for sashes.

The ride in the omnibus was a treat in itself, or we were quite as well pleased to walk down and have a really good sight of the shop windows. For me, however, there was one drawback to the pleasure of these trips: we had to pass Bond Street, where Dr. Parmly the dentist lived, and, even if we passed it safely in going down, there was

always the chance of stopping on the way up. Now, the dentist was my grand nightmare, more to be dreaded than drunken men and robbers and fire-bells all rolled into one. Little Jane's teeth, like Little Jane's curls, were luxuries for which I sighed in vain. My hair was hopelessly straight, my teeth were hopelessly crooked. If they had confined themselves to being crooked, it might have been borne; but they were worse than crooked. Instead of coming down and pushing the first teeth comfortably out, like Little Jane's, they pushed out above, and the first teeth had to be pulled out, roots and all. And after all my actual pain and worse terror the result was so poor that our mother exclaimed in despair:—

“If I could have all those teeth pulled out and put in straight, I would.”

“Mother!” I screamed in horror.

“I certainly would,” she repeated, with her little determined nod. And she would.

But there were happy days when the dentist had done his worst and we were without

a care beyond the fear of robbers and fire-engines. We were happy with our dolls, and above all with our fairies, a large family who lived in the nursery closet, and with whom we talked for hours in the dark, Little Jane repeating to me the things they whispered to her.

The fairies all answered to the name of Sandy, one name for the crowd, — “My Sandy,” “Your Sandy,” “Sandy’s children,” “Sandy’s servants,” and so forth.

Why Sandy?

“‘Why not?’ said the March Hare.”

There was in the closet a large willow clothes-basket, generally full of fairies as well as of soiled clothes. When there were no soiled clothes we got in ourselves. The willow-work was so open that the fairies could speak to us through the chinks, just like Pyramus and Thisbe; only we had never heard of them, we thought of it all ourselves, — I mean, Little Jane thought of it all herself. I did n’t care about thinking: I wanted to be doing. As soon as I heard about Martha in

the Bible, I thought that I ought to have been named for her. Poor Martha! But when once Little Jane had thought of having fairies, how firmly I believed in those fairies!

“Little Jane,” I would say, “tell me truly and solemnly, have you real fairies?”

And Little Jane would answer, “I truly and solemnly have;” and then we would sit with clasped hands in an ecstasy of bliss. There is no doubt that Little Jane’s imagination was as convincing to herself as it was to me, and, when once that closet door was shut upon us, we were miles away from this worky-day world in a land of Little Jane’s creating.

VI

BETTER than our fairies and our dolls, next indeed to our father and mother and Little Jane, I loved the baby ; for there was always a baby — a girl baby — in the nursery. As soon as she grew old enough to run about, there was another, and the charm began again.

There was great ceremony at the coming of a new baby. It was heralded by the putting up of a cot-bed in our mother's room for a strange, usually fat, and always good-natured woman, who was called Mammy Brown, or Mammy West, as the case might be. Then our mother stayed in bed, that she might be free to nurse and enjoy the new baby without being bothered with housekeeping or guests ; and as she was, as we saw, perfectly well, we had no anxiety about her, and were allowed to sit on the bed beside her and oversee Mammy West, to make sure that she did just the same



as Mammy Brown. It was a point of importance, because whatever was done for the baby was repeated on our dolls, — no detail was ever omitted. Then Dr. Buck, who brought the baby, came every day to see how she was getting on, and, as he had brought Little Jane and me in the same way, we were very fond of him. We were always in hopes that the next new baby would be a boy. Apparently Dr. Buck had only girl babies; but he never made the mistake of bringing one with straight hair when he understood how I felt about it.

From the moment of the new baby's coming, I was uneasy until I had her in my arms. Like Victor Hugo's children, my song was, "Vois-tu, ma sœur, cette poupée-là est plus amusante que l'autre. Elle remue, elle crie, elle est chaude."

It made me indignant to have Mammy West hovering over me to catch the baby, as it were. As if I ever dropped my dolls, much less the baby! I felt entirely competent to take the whole care of it from the first.

Once when aunt Elizabeth and Katy were visiting us, Katy's baby brother came, too ; and one morning the nurse put him in my arms while she made ready the bath in front of the nursery fire. She found she needed something downstairs, and, charging me to be careful, she left the room. The hour was mine and I improved it. Without a moment's hesitation I stripped the baby, and when the nurse came back I was bathing him, in exact imitation of Mammy West, with my left hand under his head, and with the sponge in my right hand splashing the water over him while he kicked and crowed lustily. The nurse said it gave her " a turn," and as I look back now I do not wonder.

There was one law in our house, — a law of the Medes and Persians, — a law in favour of the baby, and it was that if we lost a needle we must find it ; not look for it, but find it. Many an hour have we spent sprawling over the floor in search of a stray needle. And this habit was so fixed in me that, as far as I know, I have never lost a needle. If I miss

one, I — find it. After all, this was no great cross ; for I hated sewing as much as reading, and it was a respite to kick about over the floor. But sewing was a task we might not shirk. Our mother was mistress of her art, and she taught us what she knew.

One piece of needle-work stands out in my mind. It was a cravat, or, more properly, a neckcloth, for our grandfather, who was a judge, and whose portrait hung in our drawing-room. He did not live in New York, and we seldom saw him ; but our mother taught us to love him, and I thought — for she told me so — that I should like to hem a neckcloth for him. A square of lawn was folded crosswise and cut in two. Each cravat had one long “ bias ” side, one short straight side, and one selvedge. To lighten my task, our mother promised me six cents when it was done, and, as Christmas was before us, money was an object. I toiled patiently for a time, and finished the straight side and began the bias side ; but the lawn stretched and went awry, and my tired little fingers put in impa-

tient, uneven stitches that had to come out and made things worse, and the work dragged and lagged, until at last our mother said : —

“ My daughter, you have dawdled over that sewing long enough ; now I will give you three days to make an end of it, and then I shall take off a cent for every day’s delay.”

Thus urged on by fear, and dragged down by disgust, I by turns toiled at my work and neglected it, until two cents was all that I had to add to my Christmas pile. If my grandfather had felt toward that cravat as I did, he would have put it into the fire, although it did look nice when it had “ all come right in the wash,” as people say.



VII

LITTLE Jane and I were not allowed to read novels, but still we had our own notions of lovers, founded on Shakespeare and the Arabian Nights ; and when one day we were told that our aunt Ruth was engaged to be married to Mr. James Lee, we were nearly wild with excitement.

Aunt Ruth was our mother's youngest sister, who spent much of her time with us, and whom we loved with all the devotion of our little hearts. She was gentle and sweet, with that excellent thing, a soft, low voice, and she sang ballads and old songs that held us spellbound for many an hour.

Mr. James Lee was the eldest brother of two of our little friends, and we admired him at a distance, and thought him the handsomest man in New York ; and, indeed, we were not so far wrong. To his face we called him

“ You,” and behind his back plain “ James Lee ;” but now we began, privately, to try “ uncle James,” to be ready for the great day of the wedding.

Soon after we had been told of the engagement, our father and mother went South, and we were again left in the charge of aunt Ellen and the governess. Aunt Ruth stayed on, too, to be near the Lees, who already cherished her like a daughter. While our father was away we had dinner at noon, and James Lee came every night to tea, and after tea he and aunt Ruth shut themselves up in the front drawing-room and were no more seen. This ceremony filled Little Jane and me with a sense of the awfulness of being engaged : we had always thought that lovers went about like common folk, with the one addition of an uplifted look that marked them like a halo.

“ What do you suppose aunt Ruth and James Lee talk about all alone in there every evening ?” Little Jane would say with a wistful look in her dark eyes ; “ what do you suppose ? ”

“What do you think, Little Jane?” I would anxiously echo.

But Little Jane’s heart was set on exact knowledge, and one day she said, “Sister, I have a plan.”

“Have you?” I said with a little jump; “what is it?” for I knew it was sure to be fun of some kind. Little Jane’s plans were the joy of my heart.

“I’m going to find out what aunt Ruth and James Lee talk about when they are shut up in the dark in the front drawing-room.”

“O Little Jane!” I gasped, “how?”

“I’m going to get under the sofa and then I’ll hear, and I’ll tell you.”

The audacity of this scheme filled me with awe bordering on fright; but I had the sort of confidence in Little Jane that in other times would have led me a martyr to the stake, and to remonstrate never entered my head. I simply asked how she was going to do it.

“I’m going to hurry up my tea and be excused, and get under the sofa before aunt

Ruth and James Lee come up stairs," she explained. How she meant to get out again when bed-time came we never thought to ask. The simplicity of children goes beyond even their audacity.

Tea-time came and with it James Lee. Little Jane "bolted" her tea with a speed that would have convicted her of mischief on the spot if our father had been at home. Moreover, we were not allowed to be excused at all, but had to wait for our elders and betters. Under aunt Ellen's mild rule we took many a liberty unknown before, and Little Jane easily slipped off and crawled under the sofa.

I thought that aunt Ruth and James Lee would never have done with their tea and their talk. How could they dawdle so when such great things were pending? But all comes to him who waits, and at long and at last the door of the front drawing-room shut upon them, and I sat on the stairs with my heart in my mouth waiting for the end. It came only too soon. The door opened and

aunt Ruth, followed by James Lee, went into the back drawing-room and sat down with aunt Ellen.

The next moment Little Jane crept out, and, hand in hand, in breathless haste, we fled away up stairs.

“ Well ? ” I asked, when we were at a safe distance.

“ Well ! ” gasped Little Jane, and stopped to breathe.

“ Do tell me ! ” I exclaimed, almost shaking her in my impatience.

“ Well,” she began again, “ they came in and shut the door, and sat down on my sofa ; and then ” — here a breathless pause which I dared not break — “ then — he — kissed — her ! ”

“ Oh ! ” I gasped. “ Well, and what then ? ” (my teeth chattering with excitement).

“ Well, then nothing, for a long time ; and then James Lee said, ‘ Ruth, my darling, I ’m afraid it ’s rather cold in here for you to-night, I ’m going to take you into the other room ; ’ and then they went.”

“ Oh ! ” I gasped again.

Years afterwards I told aunt Ruth of this exploit of ours, and she very naturally observed that it served us right. But we did not feel “ served ” at all : on the contrary, we had fathomed the mystery and were entirely satisfied ; and although we knew well enough that we had been “ up to mischief,” as we might have put it, I do not think that we at all meant to do anything dishonourable.

Aunt Ruth, however, had more than this to bear at our hands. She was incautious enough to leave a love-letter lying about, and this we not only read but learned by heart and recited on the stairs as she passed. We thought it “ poor stuff,” but still it was a real love-letter, and the only one we had ever seen. One sentence I still remember : “ My love for you, Ruth, may be to you an old story, but to me it is ever fresh and green as the grass.” It was, on the whole, our favourite, and the one we oftenest repeated ; but I am inclined to think that the close, “ green as the grass,” may have been

Little Jane's invention. James Lee was a very young man at the time, younger, indeed, by some years than aunt Ruth; but still, when I recall the sort of man he was, his intellectual gifts and cultivated tastes, it seems unlikely that he should — even in love — have written such “poor stuff.”

Time went on and brought at last aunt Ruth's wedding-day, to which Little Jane and I had so long looked. The most important point was our dress. I have since found out that Katy thought her dress was the most important, but I cannot remember that it was anything out of the common, — just white muslin or something of that sort. Now Little Jane's frock — mine, too, of course — was white challis, with pale, delicate blue flowers, altogether lovely.

The house was full of guests, and early in the afternoon Martelle, the fashionable New York hair-dresser, came to wait on the ladies. His work was done in the nursery, and Little Jane and I, in rapt attendance, stood by. I cannot recall the style, except that smooth-

and-glossy instead of tumbled-and-tousled was admired ; and, as I watched Martelle's deft French fingers weaving in and out the heavy bands and braids, my own humble pig-tails — heavy enough, to be sure — sank into contemptible insignificance.

When all was done and the nursery left to Martelle and us, he asked me to sing for him, and I refused. For one thing, our father was not present, and for another, Martelle was not exactly a guest, and I was timid. He coaxed me until an idea came to me, — “a plan,” as Little Jane would have said.

“I will sing for you if you will dress my hair,” I said.

“I will, with pleasure,” he answered.

So I sang a little song our mother had taught us : —

“Violets, violets, beautiful blue violets,
Laden with perfume and dripping all with dew;
In dell and in dingle, by rills and by rivulets,
Lady, at sunrise, I sought them for you.”

Then Martelle lifted me on a chair, pinned a towel about my neck, and set to work comb-

ing and brushing my hair. Already I saw myself in bands and braids galore, the finest of the fine, when down fell my hopes, down sank my heart. Martelle dressed my hair indeed, but in the very same old pigtails, now more common, more despised than ever. Poor little girl !

When uncle James and aunt Ruth were married, they went to live in their own house in the country, and there they soon asked us to visit them. Katy was staying with us, and she was asked, too ; and a happy little party we were, on our best behaviour, and no mischief at all to be seen. Quite the contrary.

The day we were to leave, aunt Ruth had ice-cream made for us, and ice-cream in those days of plainer living was much more of a treat than now. We had never seen it made before, and that was half the pleasure. At noon, aunt Ruth sent us into the dining-room, where we found three saucers heaping full of delicious-looking pink ice-cream, and we dipped up a spoonful of — it was full of salt. Dr. Buck was never at a loss for new

kinds of nastinesses ; but then, they were made to be nasty, and this was a treat. We put down our spoons and looked at each other in dismay, and Little Jane and I slipped down from our chairs half minded to cry. But Katy was not New England born and bred for nothing, and her conscience was overgrown.

“Children,” she said (albeit she was younger than Little Jane), with determination written all over her ; “children, we’ve got to eat every bit of it, or else we’ll make aunt Ruth sorry.”

“But we can’t eat it, it’s so horrid,” we objected, “it will make us sick.”

“We’ve got to eat it all the same,” she said ; and, as we still hesitated, she added, “if you don’t eat yours, I shall eat mine first, and then I shall eat both of yours, for it’s got to be eaten.”

Of course there was nothing more to be said. Little Jane and I would have scorned to be behind in such virtue as that ; so we screwed up our courage and swallowed the

whole of the nauseous dose. When aunt Ruth came to taste her own ice-cream, I do not doubt that she thought children would eat anything. But nothing was ever said. This is the only thing I remember of the whole visit, except that we thought the house and the place most charming, and quite as good as a story.

VIII

It must have been soon after aunt Ruth's wedding that we spent a summer in a farmhouse with aunt Elizabeth and Katy. There were no houses near, and we ran wild from morning until night, climbing trees, wading in brooks, riding on our donkey, and roaming through the woods. I remember one day in the woods finding a tall, straight tree, with one small branch standing out at the tip-top. It seemed made for "shinning-up," and up I went, up and up until I clutched the little branch, meaning to pull myself up; but it was dead, and broke in my hand, and down I came with a rush to the ground, not really falling, but slipping down the tree without being able to stop, and tearing a long gash in my bare arm from the elbow to the wrist, the scar of which lasted for many a year. I was much grieved in looking for it not long since

to find it had gone. But I was born to hairbreadth escapes, and began at six weeks old, when my father and mother, who were taking me, the first grandchild, to show me to my grandfather, were wrecked on Long Island Sound, and I was let down over the side of the steamboat in a basket. So, having been shipwrecked, and run over by a waggon, of course I thought nothing of falling down a tree.

Our donkey's name was Fanny when she was bought for us, but we called her Balaam, in memory of "Balaam's ass." I don't see the connection now, but we thought it the only authentic name for a donkey.

Balaam was our chief pet and playmate. We took the whole care of her, and spent all our pennies buying ribbons to make rosettes for her harness. One day, when we had made her particularly fine, we pushed and pulled, and coaxed and scolded until we brought her into the house and upstairs where our mother and aunt Elizabeth were sitting, that they might share our pleasure.

That Balaam, as well as her little mistresses, barely escaped with her life on at least one occasion is certain. Katy, being from Boston, was trained to spotless purity, and she said that Balaam was dirty and we must give her a bath. Accordingly we brought a pail of warm soapsuds, with sponge and brush, and went to work, and the consequence was that poor Balaam took a bad cold and very likely had grip. We were in great anxiety for some days.

We used to saddle her, and take turns riding, and we found that we could make her trot by rattling newspapers behind her. Two of us would rattle the newspapers and the third would ride. I remember one morning when we were sent to the post office about three miles away with an important letter which was to catch the California mail. The letter was in my pocket, I being the oldest and most responsible; and when we were about half way, Little Jane was riding, and Katy and I were running behind, each armed with a little willow wand for a switch, one on each

side of the donkey in the narrow wood road. But in the interest of our talk, Katy ran over on my side of the donkey, still switching, and Balaam, feeling all the switching on one side, suddenly turned in the path, and before we could stop her, set off on a steady gallop towards home, with Little Jane on her back, leaving Katy and me in the road. We did not dare to go back for fear of losing the mail, so we had to walk all the way over and home again. As for Little Jane, all she could do was to keep her seat, for Balaam never once slackened her pace until she stood in her own stall.

In this beautiful country we wandered at will, and grew strong and brown. But, as with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, there was one forbidden thing : we might not go to a certain pond which was said to be dangerous. The danger was not explained to us ; we were simply forbidden to go, and we had no thought of disobedience.

One day two little friends came to see us, and we set out for a tramp through the woods.

After wandering for a time we came to a little brook, and as we could never see water, even as much as a puddle, without longing to dabble, we sat down, took off our shoes and stockings and hung them on the bough of a tree, also our sunbonnets, also our frocks, and in light marching order we five went gaily through the water up the stream in search of adventures. Before long we came to a pond that we had never seen before, yet I am sure we knew well enough that it was the forbidden spot. But, then, it was such a pretty pond, and not in the least dangerous, and we were such experienced paddlers and waders, and there were several planks that were as good as rafts, and, — in short, we loitered, and dug our bare feet into the soft, cool bottom of the pond, and found fun enough for a whole afternoon.

It was not long, however, before Little Jane and Katy cried out that they were sinking in the mud, and on the instant I knew the danger. But I was never one to lose my head, or to let the grass grow under my feet, and — it

was Little Jane! With strength beyond our years, — strength born of fear, — we pushed and dragged the planks towards Little Jane and Katy, and, creeping out to them, did at last draw them out of the quicksand, in which they had so nearly lost their life. As I remember, Little Jane had sunk to her waist, Katy to her arms; but perhaps the horror and blackness of that sunny day may have taken from me all power of exact testimony.¹

I cannot recall that we were punished for this disobedience. I am quite sure there was no need.

¹ Since writing the above I have seen Katy and asked her how deep she sank in the quicksand. She at once put her hand under her arm, which exactly agreed with my own recollection.

IX

I REMEMBER once listening to a talk between my father and two of his friends on the difficulty of interpreting St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. I followed their arguments with such skill as I had, wondering more and more, but not venturing to lift my voice. I turned the matter over, and determined to look into it on my own account. So I sat myself down with my Bible, and, beginning with "God who at sundry times (Numbers xii. 6, 8) and in divers manners," I went slowly and carefully on to "Grace be with you all (Titus iii. 15), Amen," looking up each reference, and, where it seemed wise, looking up a reference from a reference, steadfastly minded to leave no stone unturned, no side path unexplored, in my search for light. It was long before my task

was done, but it was done, and done thoroughly, and I went to my father.

"Father," I said timidly, "I have been carefully through St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, and I don't find anything obscure."

"Do you not, little daughter?" he said, softly stroking my hair; "I am glad of that." And he kissed me gently and turned gravely away, perhaps to hide something not quite of gravity. For me, I was somewhat abashed: I had thought he would question me on the hard parts.

X

AMONG the friends who visited our parents there was a certain gentleman whom Little Jane and I hated with all the vehemence of our souls. He was a tall, slim man, who seemed running to arms and legs, and was little more than a straight line. He had a fashion of sniffing that had a gloomy fascination for us. We used to watch and wait for it, and then shrink when it came. I know now that he was not merely harmless, but good and kind ; but he knew only one way of greeting children, and that was to tickle them. Now Little Jane and I were as nervously sensitive as most children, and at the mercy of a stupid man. He would take one of us by the hand, and then, pointing with his long, thin forefinger, with a sickly smile he would chant : —

“There was once a fox (sniff), and he had

a hole, and he said, 'Is it here?' (a thrust in the ribs), 'or is it here?' (a thrust in a fresh spot), 'or is it there?' (a final agonizing thrust).

By this time the victim was in a convulsion of hysterical laughter, which to him, I suppose, meant delight. But oh, the wrath and rebellion of our souls!

"Sister," said Little Jane to me after one of these scenes, with her soft eyes ablaze, "sister, I have a plan."

"Have you, Little Jane? What is it?"

"I'm going to cure us of being ticklish. We're going to have grand tickling-games before we get up in the morning, and we'll tickle each other until we don't mind it." (Little Jane's plan for whipping Katy until she was "used to it" must have been after our tickling-games.)

Accordingly, the next morning we stripped the bed, and, kneeling opposite each other, Little Jane gave the word, "One, two, three, tickle," and we flew at each other in a wild, screaming, shrieking, hand to hand fight,

until we rolled over panting, breathless ; then up and at it again ; and so determined were we to get the better of our hated foe, that we persevered in this scheme until we had entirely overcome all sensitiveness. I even went so far as to tickle the soles of my own feet until there was no feeling in them, for there was no knowing where the fox might not look for his hole, when once he was in earnest to find it.

Besides this gentleman, there were other friends whom we disliked, not fiercely, but mildly, because they asked such disconcerting questions as this : “ Where did you get those black eyes ? ” I never met a stranger without nervously waiting for this inevitable question. Now, to begin with, our eyes were not black, as we could see by looking in the glass ; and then how could we tell where we got them ? There was nothing to do but to stand on one foot and look foolish, until we should have been glad to exchange with any one who would have given us blue for black.

But there were many friends who came to the house whom we enjoyed and admired.

One lady in particular, a friend of aunt Ruth's, was a great favourite. She won my heart by telling me to call her "Julia," which rather annoyed aunt Ruth, who thought it wanting in respect. I thought so, too, and that was the beauty of it. Little Jane and I thought "Julia's" mouth so beautiful that we used to stand in front of the glass to "fix ours the same way;" and then we "fixed" it again when we went to sleep, in the hope of making it stay, — at least, that was what we said to each other; but in the bottom of my heart I thought, "Now, 'if I should die before I wake,' it would be so sweet to be found with that kind of mouth, and every one would love me and be sorry that I was dead."

XI

LITTLE JANE and I used to take turns in carrying our father's jug of hot water for shaving to his dressing-room in the morning, — a privilege of great honour in our eyes. It fell out one day that Little Jane forgot. Poor Little Jane! "Little Forget," our father called her, and her tender little heart was broken, never, never to be mended again. And so Little Jane made up her mind to die. She waited until the dining-room was cleared and quiet, and then she curled herself up in the window-seat, with a pencil and paper in her hand; for before dying she was going to write a poem telling her sad tale, in order that our father's heart might also be broken. (I do not know whether she meant to have him die, too, or not.) She wrote the first line of her poem, but could find no rhyme; however, it stated the case, so she closed her little

hands on it and shut her eyes. But, after all, she was n't dead, and so she had to cheer up and come alive again. I never think of that window-seat without seeing Little Jane curled up there, dying of a broken heart.

She had, at times, great trouble in making up her mind about little things; and our father, being a man of great decision, could ill brook this sort of hesitation or vacillation, and he set himself to cure her.

"Little Jane," he said, "will you go to drive this afternoon with your mother and me, or will you go out to play with your sister?"

"Oh, father, I want so much to go to drive, but then, you see" —

"Now, Little Jane (taking out his watch), I will give you three minutes to decide, and then, if your mind is not made up, I shall decide for you."

"Oh, but, father! just wait one minute before you begin, because I want to know where you are going to drive."

"Half a minute gone."

“ Oh, but, father, *father!* do you think you will drive out by the Blind Asylum, because you see ” —

“ One minute gone.”

“ Oh, dear me ! if you would just stop for a minute and let me find out what sister’s going to do, because ” —

“ Two minutes gone.”

“ Oh, dear, dear, *dear!* (jumping up and down.) Sister, what do you think you’ll do if I go to drive, because ” —

“ Three minutes up ! You’ll stay at home with your sister.”

“ Oh, father ! and I do believe you’ll go to the Blind Asylum, after all ! ”

There were a good many of these scenes, and I think Little Jane must have been cured, for I am sure we never had these agonies when she was older.

One other trouble she had, poor Little Jane ! She was often late for breakfast, to the great displeasure of our father, who was promptness itself. He tried a system of rewards, and a system of punishments ; but all

in vain. Little Jane was awake with the lark, and out of her bed, but she would dawdle in her dressing, and of course she was late. So one day our father said to her, "Little Jane, to-morrow morning, when breakfast is ready you will come down *precisely as you are*." Accordingly, the next morning, when the bell rang, Little Jane left the nursery in her petticoats. Nurse, perhaps feeling herself in fault, ran after us and flung Little Jane's frock over her head, and between us we managed, without stopping, to get one sleeve on, and so we came gravely into the breakfast-room, and Little Jane, with her frock hanging on one arm, was lifted into her chair.

How our father and mother kept their faces during that meal, I do not know; as for me, I was too awestruck to have the smallest wish to laugh. But I cannot help thinking that Little Jane's spirit of mischief kept her from the depth of misery in which I was plunged.

I do not remember what steps our father took next, but he never tried the come-down-precisely-as-you-are method again.

XII

BESIDES our own home, there was another that we loved as well, and where, for a few short years, Little Jane and I were idolized and indulged by our dear English grandmother and our three aunts. Our grandfather, who was a clergyman, had died many years before.

When we knew our grandmother, she was nearly eighty years old, but so small, so sweet, so active and merry, that none of our playmates were half such good company, and no one in all the world — except our father and mother — half so dear. She was round and plump, with dark eyes and a little pink colour in her cheeks, and the smallest and softest of hands.

She wore a black bombazine gown, scant in the skirt, crossed on the breast, with leg-of-mutton sleeves, and a white lawn kerchief

at the throat. Her widow's cap was made with a tall crown at the back and two full puffs around the face, and was tied under the chin with broad lawn strings. This cap she clear-starched herself with exquisite care. We used to sit at her feet and watch her slipping the puffs over a rod to make them stand out. At her side she wore a thick gold watch, with a seal hanging on a black ribbon with a gold slide. She carried a tortoise-shell snuff-box inlaid with gold, and a red silk pocket-handkerchief.

She lived in a large, old-fashioned house in a village on the Hudson River, where it was our greatest delight to visit. The "front stoop" with the tall oleander and pomegranate trees, — forever, to my child's mind, a blaze of pink and crimson bloom; the sunny kitchen; the clean, cool cellar with hanging-shelves and drying herbs; the best parlour-chamber (always pronounced *chamber*); the guest-room, with its huge four-post bedstead and trundle-bed underneath; grandmother's room; the aunts' rooms; the linen-press in

the upper hall ; the tall clock in the dining-room, with a man in the moon which waxed and waned ; and the great open attic, full of endless stores and treasures,—were one and all places and things of such fascination as even Little Jane's imagination could not equal. In the attic was a locked closet, into which we crept on tiptoe after our grandmother, and where she dealt out maple sugar, cakes of pink soap stamped with bunches of flowers, pipes for blowing soap-bubbles, and things too many to count. Why the closet should ever have been locked I cannot guess, unless to clothe it in mystery for us. Certainly nothing was ever denied us that love could invent.

But even in this Paradise Satan was still busy, and one day I, having strayed into the cellar, and seeing a pumpkin-pie on one of the hanging-shelves, thought I would help myself. Whether I meant to cover my tracks with a lie, or not, I do not know. We seldom planned ahead. So I climbed on a chair and reached up for the pie ; but, alas ! my foot slipped and I fell, pushing my knee

between two of the bars at the back of the chair, and pinning myself fast. I struggled to work myself free ; it was of no use, nor could I walk away with the chair on my leg, and no pie, either. I had to wait until some one came to loose me, to forgive me, to comfort me.

Certainly no children ever had such a grandmother's house to visit, or such a grandmother in it. Our father was her youngest and best beloved child, — "the only one who never had a whipping," one of our uncles told us. "Did the rest of you get whipped?" we asked. "Yes, indeed," was the grave reply, "regularly every Saturday night ; your grandfather said if we did not need it then, we should directly. But I should not have liked to see your grandmother's face if your grandfather had dared to lay his hand on your father." All this we accepted as an exact statement of the truth. But the idea of any one laying his hand on our father was beyond our grasp ; we tried to think how it would be, and gave it up ; and, although we should have

hesitated to say that we were glad our grandfather was dead, we certainly were thankful that he was not at grandmother's, and could by no possibility lay his hand on us. I now know that he was not only respected and admired, but beloved by his people during his life and mourned at his death; nor must it be supposed that he ever "laid his hand" on them except in blessing.

Our father was always going to see his mother, and we were always going, too. Sometimes we went in the day-boat, sometimes in the night-boat. Each had its charm; but on the whole we liked the night-boat better on account of being put to sleep in a berth, where we always meant to lie awake all night to enjoy the strangeness of the scene, — the rocking and creaking of the boat, the swinging of the lamps, the regular thud, thud of the engine, — and where, instead, we invariably fell asleep, and knew nothing until daylight.

In the winter, when the boats were not running, we went by the Harlem Railway, on

which for some reason we had passes. On certain street-cars, too, we had only to give our name and the conductors passed us with a bow.

I remember one cold winter, when men and boys were walking on the ice from New York to Brooklyn, that our father went to see his mother and took me with him. It was the first time I had been away without our mother and Little Jane, and, although I was much uplifted with pride, I was also a little awe-struck at finding myself launched on the world with so august a companion as our father. He, however, had evidently made up his mind to be a companion, and he set himself to play with me for the first and only time in my life. He bought some biscuit when we stopped, and then played shop, breaking the biscuit in small bits, piling them on the window-ledge and carrying on a brisk and exciting trade. It was almost too much happiness ; I was such a quiet little playmate that I almost doubt if he knew the depth of my content. I had so few words for my father ! It was enough for

me to be where he was, and he always seemed to understand.

On this day the river was frozen solid, and when we had gone to the end of the railway we were still some miles south of our grandmother's home. So we were packed into a sledge and driven on the river-ice for the rest of the way, and it was late at night when we stopped at the door. Our father was doubtless looked for ; but certainly I was not, and when he put me into my grandmother's arms there was a great cry of joy, and I heard the sledge-driver say, " Dear me ! how glad they are to see the baby ! " I was mortified to be called a baby, — such a big girl, travelling alone with my father ! But, as I remember being handed about like cake, I think the man may have had some excuse for the liberty he took with my age.

One of our aunts, aunt Mary, was old and like a child. We loved her and dealt tenderly with her, and led her gently about, for she was always pleased to be where we were ; but we could never understand why she was " like

that." If we fell down or hurt ourselves, she would always cry, and it was she who had to be comforted and not we. The next aunt was aunt Ellen, who came to live with us when our grandmother died. The youngest was aunt Jane, and we loved her next to our grandmother. She and our father were nearly of an age, and had been close friends all their lives, and Little Jane was named for her. These dear people were the only friends who never made any difference between Little Jane and me, and I can almost think they never felt any.

There was a boy, Henry Pendleton, who lived at our grandmother's and waited on the table, and we were great friends with him. I remember once at dinner Little Jane called out: "Henry Pendleton, you need n't wash my plate, I've licked it clean."

Our grandfather had been the settled clergyman in the village for many years, and after he died our grandmother and the aunts looked after the people as they had always done. If any one was sick, the aunts were sent for; if

any one died, the aunts were best fitted to help and comfort those who were left. Trained nurses were unknown, but neighbours helped neighbours, and very literally bore one another's burdens. I remember one Sunday when our grandmother and the aunts were busy all day making a shroud ; and, much as I hated sewing on a week-day as a task, to be allowed to sew on Sunday was a real treat. The charm lay in doing something wrong, yet having it right. I plied my needle with a zest, if not speed, that kept pace with the elders. It was such a lucky combination of Sunday and shroud !

But all this life vanished like a dream when our grandmother died. Little Jane was not quite six, and could not recall the details of the life as I did ; but the charm had its root deep in her heart, and grandmother's house was the same to us both.

Not long after our grandmother died, aunt Jane was married to a widower with several children, the youngest of whom, Susy, was just Little Jane's age. " If Susy only had

been born two weeks sooner, we should have been twins," Little Jane said. Susy was very fond of her new mother, and she told us in confidence, on the wedding-day, that her father was going to marry "the best and most Christianest woman in the world," and the elder children agreed with her in more correct grammar.

The summer after aunt Jane's marriage our father and mother went to Virginia, and Little Jane and I went to stay with aunt Jane. Aunt Mary and aunt Ellen were there, too; but aunt Mary was too weak to play with us any more, and at last she stayed in bed all the time, and we played in the old-fashioned garden, gay with flowers and sweet with box-hedges, or wandered through the apple-orchards and lanes, and whispered softly when we came into the hushed house.

While aunt Mary was so sick and the other aunts had their hands full, Susy fell ill, too, and on close questioning it came out that she and Little Jane had been eating green apples. "Oh, ever so many!" Little Jane said, and

presently she, too, was sick, and our father and mother were sent for by telegraph. Telegraphing was not common in those days, and it frightened me that they should be sent for like that. We seemed wrapt in danger. The desolation of the house was something I had never known. No one had any time to spend on me. I wandered forlorn through the halls, or sat mute and dreary in corners or on the staircase and watched the aunts and the doctor stepping softly from room to room, and once I heard the doctor say, "It is only a question now which of the three will go first."

But it was aunt Mary who went out alone, the dear aunt Mary whom we had loved but never known; "the most unselfish woman I ever knew," our father often said. And this, from a man who weighed his words, a man who had known his mother and our mother, and his sister Jane, meant much.

The two children struggled back to life, and when our father and mother came, and I saw Little Jane, I should never have known her. There was nothing alive about her save

her serious eyes. Her arms were nothing but sticks, and her small hands, like birds' claws, lay motionless on the sheet. Was that my Little Jane? Would she ever smile again? — ever stand up? — ever play with me? What would life be worth without Little Jane?

She was wrapped up and carried on board the boat and taken home to New York, our fellow-travellers sadly shaking their heads and following us with pitying eyes. It seemed, indeed, a hopeless case. But Little Jane was watched and tended with jealous care, and slowly coaxed back to health and strength.

One day, soon after we had brought her home, aunt Ruth said to her, "Take this medicine, Little Jane, and then you shall have a couple of grapes." So she swallowed the dose, and aunt Ruth brought the grapes; but when Little Jane saw them her lip quivered, her eyes filled with tears, and she broke into the weak, pitiful crying of a sick child. "You promised me a cupful," she wailed, "and there are only two." "A cupful?" repeated

aunt Ruth, puzzled; and then she understood. Little Jane did not know that "a couple" meant two. Poor aunt Ruth was crying bitterly herself by this time, as she said, "Stop crying, Janey dear, and aunt Ruth will go out and buy you the prettiest thing she can find." And off went this tender-hearted young aunt, and came back shortly, bringing a small china vase with roses painted on it. We thought it perfectly beautiful, and prized it ever after as one of our choicest possessions.

Not long since, listening to a talk on the training of taste in children, the thought of this little vase came suddenly to me. Was it beautiful in itself, or beautiful only to us? I rashly put it to the test. Going to my room I took it from the cupboard, where it lies under lock and key, and set it on my dressing-table. When one of the ladies came in, I said carelessly, "When I was a child, I thought that vase perfectly beautiful." "Did you?" she said with a laugh; "what odd notions children have!" I locked it up with

a strange pain at my heart. I look at it every day. It is more beautiful than ever. In time I may once more feel kindly toward that friend.

After the experience of Little Jane's illness, we were constantly playing sick, and once, when one of our mother's young brothers was visiting us, we proposed that we should play sick for the pleasure of having a real man for a doctor ; it was so seldom that we had a boy to play with. It appeared, however, in the distribution of parts, that Willy liked ipecac. This was so extraordinary a taste — ipecac being only once removed from castor-oil in nastiness — that our play was at a standstill until we could adjust our minds to the new conditions. But, once accepted, they offered new scope to our talents. Why should not Willy be sick child and take real medicine ? A real man for a doctor was as nothing compared to the excitement of giving real medicine, and ipecac at that. So Willy was put to bed, and Dr. Little Jane prescribed ipecac, and I, armed with bottle and spoon,

gave the dose. What fun it was ! The patient did not improve ; the doctor ordered more ipecac at short intervals, until —

The play came to an abrupt end. The doctor and nurse were turned out in disgrace, and the patient took to his bed in desperate if short-lived earnest.

XIII

WHEN Little Jane and I were about eleven and thirteen years old, our father decided to send us to a school. He selected one kept by three Scotch ladies, — Miss Christina, Miss Clementina, and Miss Jessie Gibson. If enjoyment of school-life, added to masterly drilling in the foundations of education, was what he had in view, he certainly was justified in his choice. Fun and work were joined in a way that, I imagine, must be rare. But, to be sure, our experience of school-life was limited.

The three Scotch ladies were aided and abetted by an assistant, Miss Paterson, who was even more Scotch than they. It was a liberal education alone to hear her call out with her delicious burr (I know of no other way to describe the roll of her “r”), “Ladies, take your-r-r places.”

We were always "ladies" collectively, or "Miss Smith" or "Miss Jones" individually, and we never addressed each other in any less dignified way. We feared and admired Miss Christina and Miss Paterson (Miss Jessie would, I think, if left to herself, have been almost good-natured), but they were too awesome for us to venture on loving; indeed, love as a recognized element was wholly set aside. That one and all must have loved their work, including our unruly selves, is certain; but we did not give their sterling quality so soft a name.

Miss Christina, the eldest and most crushingly tart, took charge of the first class, — the young ladies; Miss Jessie took the second class; and Miss Clementina kept the house, and was at hand to fill any empty place. Miss Paterson was mistress of the room where Little Jane and I were put; and I have a dim recollection of some small children in the basement, but of this I cannot be sure, as we had nothing to do with them.

School opened at nine o'clock, and drilling

“on the jump” is the only way of describing the daily school-room scenes. Anything like apathy, inattention, dullness, was impossible. If the day was rainy, Miss Christina dropped upon us like an avenging angel: “Ladies, fetch me your umbrellas and overshoes, and let me see that they are properly marked.” Then what a flurry and skurry! what a dash for pen or pencil! Anything to get our name written in or on before we were seized. One favourite retreat was the bathing-room which adjoined our school-room, where was a tub with an ample curtain under whose friendly shade two or three culprits might hide and scribble their names in breathless haste before they were ignominiously unearthed.

On one such morning Little Jane had been lucky enough to get her overshoes marked before Miss Christina clutched her, and, flushed with triumph, she held them forth for inspection. In awful silence our Nemesis looked upon the two initials, then turned upon us in wrath. “Ladies, how often must

I tell you that your full name is required?" And anything like the scorn of her tone is beyond me to describe, as she added, "Pray who is 'J. E.'? If your initials, Miss E——, were 'X. Y. Z.', it might pass, but anything short of that is futile. Go down one place in class." As under her scathing examination almost every lady went "down one place in class," not much harm was done.

One might suppose that after a few stormy days all the umbrellas and overshoes would be adequately marked. They never were. I don't know how we could escape the foregone conclusion. We always did.

This flurry safely past, we returned to our school-room. The desks were ranged around three sides of the room against the wall, the chairs pushed under them. In front of these desks we took our places, standing with our arms folded behind our backs, in the order of our rank when school had closed the day before, with the corrections made by Miss Christina's "down one place." There was no uncertainty in taking our stand: we had called

our numbers the day before, and names and numbers were registered at the end of each day, the head girl being number one, and so on. The "lady" at the top of the class bore the title of "Dux."

I cared nothing for study, or for knowledge for its own sake, but I was blest with a "vaulting ambition," and gave myself no rest day or night in my fight for the top. That I carried off the prize at the end of the year was no consolation, for the reason that Miss Hewitt left school, on account of her health, in the spring, and, at the time of leaving, her mark was higher by a fraction than mine. I here give her the honour that is her due. It was not that she was a closer or more faithful student than I, but she had a better informed mind, and was a lady of quicker parts, — all of which told in our drilling.

When we had taken our places at nine o'clock, Miss Paterson came forward with a book held flat in her hands, and each lady, beginning with number one, laid her hands

on the book for inspection. Did hands or nails fall short of the high standard of cleanliness, she lost her place. That pins and pen-knives were passed rapidly down the ranks was a thing Miss Paterson chose never to see.


While this exercise was going forward, any late-comer took her place at the foot of the class and had to work her way up. There was one lady, Miss Post, who was invariably late ; but, as she was one of our stars, she as invariably worked her way up and fought for the top with the rest of us, not seldom beating us all.

After the hands had been tested, the next thing was to repeat the books of the Bible in order, each lady naming one book. In spite of the daily repetition it was sharp practice, and a slip was fatal to one's place. I became so expert in this exercise that I used to say all the books, from Genesis to Revelation, without taking breath.

Many years afterward I had charge of a little girl with a mop of curly brown hair

that took a deal of brushing, — one hundred strokes I gave her hair in the morning. Remembering Miss Paterson's drill and the help it had been to me, I taught my little girl the books of the Bible in order while I brushed her hair. She is grown up now and has little girls of her own, and she says that when she feels the brush on her hair she involuntarily and mechanically recites, "Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy."

To return to school and Miss Paterson. After saying the books of the Bible, we said our catechism, — "The Westminster Shorter," — a part on one day and the rest on another. Our father gave me fifty cents for repeating the whole, questions as well as answers, without the slip of a single word. I was perfectly satisfied then; to-day I should think myself underpaid. In school we were, almost to a girl, Presbyterians, and knew our catechism; but there was one lady who was an Episcopalian, and there was a rumour of one Unitarian; but this Little Jane and I never believed, for we could see nothing that



looked like a Unitarian. I don't know what our notion was, but I suppose we thought she would be of a different colour. The name of the Episcopal lady was Janey Crane. We all loved Janey, and she was one of the few whom we called by their Christian names. She never recited our catechism, but stood still in her place, while the rest of us went up and down, skipping her when we crossed her path. Then, later, she said her own catechism, which was a trifle as compared with ours. Little Jane and I looked at her with great interest, for she was the only Episcopalian we had ever seen. We felt that she was a shade superior in some way, although on the high road to idolatry and confusion of face. But anything more simple and modest than her bearing could not be found. Hers is one of the few faces that stand out as I run down the ranks of the school in my mind's eye. Dear Janey Crane, here's my love to you!

After the catechism we had a short lesson on the Bible, and one morning, while we were on this exercise, Miss Paterson suddenly asked

the head of the class, "Miss Hewitt, do you sympathize in joy or in sorrow?" "In sorrow," promptly answered Miss Hewitt. "The next," said Miss Paterson. "In joy," was my still more prompt reply. "The next." Doubt, hesitation, gloom settled upon the class. What did Miss Paterson wish us to say? "Sorrow," faltered number three. "The next;" and so on down the class, some saying "joy," some "sorrow," all equally persuaded that "sorrow" was correct. But naught cared we for correct: all we wanted was to suit Miss Paterson and win to the head. As usual, Miss Post was fidgiting at the foot of the class, frantically biding her time, in fear lest she should lose her chance. But no; at last she was "the next," and her triumphant "*Both!*" won the place. "Right, go to the head," was Miss Paterson's word, as with a glance of scorn her eye ran down our ranks. "Were ever such stupid ladies!" was plain to be read.

After the Bible, Miss Paterson took up any study that she pleased, — we never knew

which would come first. Not that it was of any consequence : there was no time for study, nor any chance to open a book. From one thing to another we passed, with the promiscuous, impossible-to-be-foreseen questions thrown in, that were my terror and dismay not to say disgrace.

At noon we were dismissed for recess and luncheon. When not in class, we were bound to speak French ; but this, as some one has wittily said, “ is not so difficult as has been supposed.” A few simple rules we learned, and strictly kept to them : —

Rule One. Always say “ vous ” instead of “ you.”

Rule Two. Add “ ez ” to your verbs.

Rule Three. Polish off your sentence with “ s’il vous plait.”

And there you are.

“ Shutez the window, s’il vous plait,” was “ French of Paris ” for us. “ Je ne souse pas ” was a phrase much in vogue among us until one day, when Miss Christina caught it on the lips of an unlucky wight, who, during the

space of un mauvais quart d'heure, wished she had taken less liberty with a respectable tongue.

For those who cannot speak French with equal fluency, I will say that "Je ne souse pas" means "I don't care!"

XIV

THUS, year after year, Little Jane and I walked hand in hand, sharing joy and sorrow, one in heart, in soul, in life, until at last, one day, far off in a foreign land, Little Jane and I said good-by, and I saw her no more.

It is many, many years since that sorrowful June morning ; many, many years since Little Jane dwelt among us ; but in the hearts of those who loved her she can never die.

“ He that hath found some fledged bird’s nest may know,
At first sight, if the bird be flown;
But what fair dell or grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown.”

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